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Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

Submission guidelines
Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: *editor.platypusreview@gmail.com*. All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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About the Platypus Affiliated Society
The Platypus Affiliated Society, established in December 2006, organizes reading groups, public fora, research and journalism focused on problems and tasks inherited from the "Old" (1920s-30s), "New" (1960s-70s) and post-political (1980s-90s) Left for the possibilities of emancipatory politics today.

The Platypus Review

Issue 147 | June 2022

1 **Deep underground in the Philippines**
An interview with Nathan Quimpo
Daniel Rudin

3 **The early Antideutsch and the working class**
Max Hörügel

4 **The failure of the Antideutsch**
A response to Max Hörügel
Michael Fischer

WWW:

Three magazines
Ghosts of the New Left
Efraim Carlebach

Essential workers of the world, unite!
Keith McHenry

A Maoist response to "What was the Chinese Revolution and where is it going?"
David McMullen

147

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Deep underground in the Philippines

An interview with Nathan Quimpo

Daniel Rudin

On March 19, 2019, Platypus Affiliated Society member Daniel Rudin interviewed Nathan Quimpo, a long-time political activist in the Philippines before his academic career, in which he is a semi-retired adjunct professor of political science and international relations at the University of Tsukuba and Hosei University in Japan. An edited transcript follows.

Daniel Rudin: How were you first politicized?

Nathan Quimpo: I was in my senior year of high school at San Beda College, in early 1970, when you had all these riotous demonstrations occurring right there on Mendiola where our school was. I had already been talking with my younger brother who was involved in activism in Philippine Science High School as early as 68. He would tell me about the protests they were having against the administration in the school, and against Marcos. I didn't really join in the demonstrations until the First Quarter Storm of January to March 1970. At that time there were many students demonstrating for a peaceful Constitutional Convention. On January 26, I went with a big group from our school. We went home early, as we were still high school students. Then we heard there had been clashes between the police and the demonstrators. There was another big protest on January 30, where some students were killed. Then the demonstrations became bigger and bigger.

After finishing high school, I went on to Ateneo de Manila University where I became more involved — despite it being an elite university. When martial law was declared in September 1972, sixteen of us radical activists were blacklisted. We were given what they termed "honorable dismissal," not expulsion. An honorable dismissal allows you to at least continue studying in other universities. Instead of continuing with our studies, we went underground.

DR: Could you summarize how you and your family were involved in that period?

NQ: We were ten brothers and sisters. There were quite a number of activists in the family: seven joined the radical movement at one point or the other. We saw each other in the movement. Five of us were detained, as well as three in-laws. And some of us were tortured. Mendiola where our school was. I had already been talking with my younger brother who was involved in activism in Philippine Science High School as early as 68. He would tell me about the protests they were having against the administration in the school, and against Marcos. I didn't really join in the demonstrations until the First Quarter Storm of January to March 1970. At that time there were many students demonstrating for a peaceful Constitutional Convention. On January 26, I went with a big group from our school. We went home early, as we were still high school students. Then we heard there had been clashes between the police and the demonstrators. There was another big protest on January 30, where some students were killed. Then the demonstrations became bigger and bigger.

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The torture that I experienced was nothing compared with the torture of other activists. Mine was just for maybe a total of ten hours or so, of hot and cold treatment. Sometimes they would try to talk you over to indicate where your comrades were. They punched you and they even used electric shocks. They would pound your head on the wall, deliver karate kicks, and then they hit you on the shoulders with slabs of wood.

DR: What were you doing for the movement before that third time that you were arrested?

NQ: I was involved in organizing youth and students, and I linked up with cultural activists in Cebu City, but I didn't last long. I was there only for less than a month and then I got caught.

DR: What kind of work would cultural activists have been doing? And how would you work?

NQ: Plays, sometimes a combination of choral numbers and plays. The group in Cebu was much more into plays. Since it was martial law, they would stage plays that were only just a bit on the critical side, about the situation in the country, of the poor, the peasants, was when the writ of habeas corpus was suspended by Marcos in 71. That was just after the Plaza Miranda bombing. I was putting up posters in Marikina with some other students. That was just an overnight detention. The second time was a few months after martial law was declared. The house that our group was staying in was a "UG" or underground house. It was raided by the military. We were brought to Fort Bonifacio, and I was detained for one year.

The third time I was arrested was in Cebu, at the Colegio de San Jose-Recoletos, while talking with some students. I was brought to the army camp blindfolded. I didn't know where I was. I was tortured. Afterwards they put me in a regular detention center. I was transferred from Cebu to Manila when my father was dying of cancer. Fortunately, I was able to visit my father before he died and was also able to attend the funeral — with two guards both times. Two of my brothers could not come because they were being hunted down by the military. My third detention lasted ten and a half months.

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People in the underground as well as open legal activists worked together in organizing the open mass movements. Mass leaders emerged from the labor movement or student movement. But since they were identified with the radical Left, the military could easily pick them up, detain them. So the forces of the radical movement linked up with traditional opposition politicians and other personages, and with the religious. During rallies and demonstrations these figures would be the ones who would speak out openly. It was more difficult for Marcos and the military to arrest them because they were very well-known elite traditional oppositionists.

For instance, Soling Duterte, the mother of Rodrigo Duterte, was the Mindanao chairperson of broad anti-Marcos alliances. I cannot recall now which alliances she headed then — the Nationalist Alliance, the Coalition for the Restoration of Democracy (CORD), or Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN). Even Duterte himself was involved. At that time he was the state prosecutor, so he was working for the Marcos government. But secretly he was helping people in the movement, especially those who were victims of human rights violations. The underground was definitely in touch with him.

DR: What do you say when you're doing this coalition building?

NQ: I was deep underground, and so, it's only when we really were very sure of a certain opposition politician that those in the underground would directly talk with him or her. I talked with the likes of Assemblymen Nene Pimentel and Homobono Adaza. Assemblymen, because there was no congress then, there was a National Assembly. I also talked with Mayor Cesar Climaco, and with Zafiro Respicio, another assemblyman. These were opposition politicians. I would identify myself as being with the underground, specifically with the National Democratic Front (NDF).

DR: The opposition was pretty well-organized?

NQ: The opposition politicians did not have much of an organized base really. They wanted to link up with us because they knew that in terms of mobilizations for protests, they could bank on us. But we also needed them, in the sense that leaders from the mass movement were too unknown. It was easy for them to get arrested if they spoke out.

DR: Strategically the Left was thinking of the national opposition as a partner or ally of sorts in the anti-dictatorship struggle?

NQ: Yes.

DR: How early did the split in the Left start to happen?

NQ: Well, we must go back to 78, the time when the Manila-Rizal Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) went against the decision of the national leadership, the Central Committee, and participated and actively campaigned for Laban (Fight), the party that opposed Marcos. It was a slate of Laban headed by Ninoy Aquino. Against Imelda Marcos and twenty other candidates who ran under the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL).[1] The decision of the national leadership was that we should boycott this election, but then the Manila-Rizal leadership had negotiated with the opposition. They were hoping that there would be some sort of upsurge of the mass movement during and immediately after the election. There were massive protests, but after the elections, things simmered down. The Manila-Rizal committee was suspended, in fact, even demoted.

That was the first major rupture within the revolutionary movement, the first major internal debate. Then in the period of the early 80s there were some ideas about the three strategic combinations, and the idea about the ten theses: basically, that the situation had changed in the Philippines, that it is not as semi-feudal as once thought. The urban population was growing. There were a lot more workers and urban poor than before. There was also the importance of the middle forces, the impact of religion. Then there were the implications of all these on overall strategy and tactics. You would have to pay more attention to urban work, to work with middle forces. This had implications too for the forms of struggle, that the mass movement would play a bigger role. Those were ideas that started coming out in 1980–82. In my case I was pushing the idea of an insurrectional strategy instead of Mao's strategy of the protracted people's war. And then the Mindanao Commission adopted a politico-military framework, more akin to the strategy of Vietnam.

The early Antideutsch and the working class

Max Hörügel

This article originally appeared as "Die frühen Antideutschen und die Arbeiterklasse," Die Platypus Review *16 (Herbst 2021), available online at <https://platypus1917.org/2021/09/30/fruehe_antideutsche_und_die_arbeiter/>. It has been translated into English by Tamas Vilaghy.*

GERMAN REUNIFICATION WAS A TIME of general decline for all organizations to the Left of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). The helpless inability of the German Left to theoretically grapple with reunification and thereby effectively react to it, coupled with the collapse of the Eastern bloc, led to membership decline, organizational dissolution, and the rapid depoliticization of large circles of previously communist activists. The German Communist Party (DKP), for instance, which had around 57,000 members in 1986, shrank to a few thousand just four years later. To the German Left of the time, the period after reunification appeared as one of the greatest moments of crisis in its history, at the level of both membership numbers and the social relevance of radical Leftist positions.[1] Despite this, the collapse and integration of the actually existing socialist states brought forth optimism at the same time; thus the student organization of the DKP spoke of a "historically unique chance to renew socialism," and the Trotskyist International Socialist Workers Organization (ISA) perceived a possible "unity of the German working class"[2] in the discontents of the East German population. The beginning of the 90s can therefore be conceptualized as a decisive moment in the further development of the German Left. Shocked in this moment, the Left was compelled by the collapse of the former (geopolitical) frames of reference to resituate the relationships between failed examples of actually existing socialism, missed revolution in West Germany, and its own history and practice within these. The end of the Cold War moreover allowed for sober reflection upon this history and that of the real socialist regimes, no longer forced, as before, one-sidedly into "for or against the Soviet Union."

A new Left force did develop in this potentially decisive moment, the Antideutsch. It formed on the one hand from the organizational groups of two demonstrations, "Never again Germany" and "Death is a Master from Germany" (May 12 and November 3, 1990, respectively), and on the other, from the disintegration of the Maoist Communist Alliances. The Antideutsch appeared promising as they developed increasingly fundamental differences from the rest of the Left, giving the impression that they were the necessary critical force (through their rediscovery of the Frankfurt School, among other things) to use the historical moment and accomplish the realignment and reconstitution of a revolutionary Left.

This, however, did not happen. The moment of the Left's potential self-reflection passed unused, and instead of working itself out of the one-sided divisions of the Left that preceded it, the Antideutsch only further obscured the question of what the Left is, and how it should exit its crisis. But why could the Antideutsch not bring about the reconstitution of a revolutionary socialist Left? My thesis in this article is that the Antideutsch were doomed to failure from the start. They had played out their potential role in rebuilding the Left already years before their positioning in Yugoslavia or later in the Iraq War, even before the splitting of the German Left into pro-Israel and pro-Palestine camps. Their critique remained a critique of symptoms, such as the Left's contempt for modernity, their manic concern for the hated West, or their overidentification with the so-called autochthonous, now oppressed, people of the Third World. The Antideutsch criticized these false, one-sided notions with which the Left had transformed into the Right under the guise of revolutionary pathos. They never recognized, however, how all these phenomena were necessary expressions of the revolutionary Left's estrangement from its proper task. This task was, and remains, to organize workers as a conscious social actor, and to guide this process of becoming conscious, the class struggle, in the direction of socialism. This essential problem, that the revolutionary Left no longer understood its own purpose, remained hidden to the Antideutsch. I argue in the following that they necessarily could not see the core of the Left's problem, and thereby could not make use of this historical opening for self-reflection. This is because the Antideutsch unconsciously took up precisely the rest of the Left's essential notions about the workers, leading them down warped paths where they tried to reject the problem of the working class entirely.

I will examine first the fringe group and privilege theory informed by Mao and Marcuse, what I call *Soft Maoism* following Mike Macnair, and second, the so-called mass line. Both notions are sediments of 20th century Marxism deposited onto the ideological foundations of the German Left. Both Maoist in their origin, these concepts were taken over in fragments by the New Left, further regressing under these conditions. I want to present both these concepts now, so as to show at the end how far they obscured the task of the Left, and thereby its reconstitution, for the Antideutsch.

Soft Maoism and fringe group theory

In his article "Intersectionality, the Highest Stage of Western Stalinism," Mike Macnair shows that the privilege theory so prevalent on the Left today has its roots in the 1960s in what he terms Soft Maoism, namely the Western student version of Chinese Maoism.[3] According to Macnair, privilege theory arises out of a false reading of Lenin's *Imperialism* (1916) pamphlet, in which too much emphasis is laid on the argument around a labor aristocracy. Lenin tried to clarify just how the better-off workers veered towards opportunistic social-chauvinism by connecting their political corruption to their capital-mediated share of the profits of imperialism.[4] Following Stalin's death and the break with the Soviet Union, Maoism stretched this insight into a Manichaean opposition between oppressors and oppressed, projected onto the global balance of power: here the opportunistic mass unions in the grip of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union along with the corrupt, since privileged, white proletariat in the capitalist centers; there the repressed peoples of the Third World and the peasants who needed to be brought into opposition against the imperialistic nations as new revolutionary subjects, since the Western proletariat had frittered this role away.

This arrangement appeared conclusive to the New Left of the 1960s: in the industrial states where the New Left mainly formed, it faced a working class which by all accounts was fully integrated into consumption and mass society, often alongside a monolithic, Stalinist or opportunist social-democratic union bloc. From here the New Left lionized every uprising in the Third World and overidentified with every possible self-proclaimed anti-imperialist power, not least because it offered a pressure-release valve for revolutionary action which had accumulated in blocked practice. Concurrently, Marcuse's fringe group theory provided the meager feed for the New Left, located as it was in imperialistic rather than peasant or colonized countries, to set off on its own search for new revolutionary subjects. In the last section of his 1964 book, *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse argued that the traditional style of politics had become "ineffective – maybe even dangerous," in adhering to the idea of popular sovereignty.[5] The popular basis (*Volksbasis*) was conservative within the totalitarian tendencies of one-dimensional society, as the people (*Volk*) had become the ferment of social cohesion.[6] The working class became props for the dominant mode of life, and their rise to positions of control would only prolong domination and repression.[7] Marcuse's newly oppositional, revolutionary force was therefore the "substrate of outlaws and outsiders: the exploited and persecuted of other races and colors, the unemployed and the disabled." Their opposition struck the system from outside, and so would not be diverted through it.[8] To the most repressed, those who stood outside the system and were called upon by this externality to bring the revolution within, to the center of society, Marcuse contrasted a seemingly fully integrated working class dissolved within the people. This contrast recalls two Maoist concepts: the revolutionary character of the Third World ("Third World First"), and the "Change of Cities" by peasants, an actually revolutionary class unburdened by capitalist deformations.

Following this logic, the New Left attributed system-transcending needs or extraordinary revolutionary energy to all possible fringe groups and minorities. This was also the basis for a privilege theory which classified social actors according to their degree of privilege, here understood negatively as repression; the Western white working class, especially their better-off sections, amassed privileges against those who were excluded and (apparently) non-integrated.

The primary social fringe group which the New Left chose as a new revolutionary subject were orphans and institutionalized children (*Heimkinder*). From 1965 to the end of the 60s, students supported escapees from children's and youth homes, many of whom were taken to communes and experimental student residences. It became clear, however, how far the project of transforming these fringe groups into champions of socialism was doomed from the start: the orphans often proved incapable of directing their newfound freedom towards revolutionary ends, instead slipping into criminality or urban subcultures.[9] Besides frustration around the children, two further developments caused a final break with the fringe group theory: the 1969 wave of wildcat strikes in West Germany which seemed to refute the full integration of the working class, and the disintegration of the student movement and the SDS in the stagnation of the university struggle.[11] Almost all the groups at the so-called "Fringe Group Conference" of February 1970 finally abandoned the theory.[12]

The mass line and the K-Groups

In the course of these developments, the Left's orientation to the working class completely reversed: especially the Maoist "Marxist-Leninist" K-Groups (*Kommunistiche Gruppen*) now took up the mass line, a notion adopted by Mao from the Stalinist Proletkult and taken up by the German New Left through reading Mao, which is to say, Maoist readings of Lenin. The masses are always latently on the side of socialism in this other strain of Maoism:

> The people, and only the people, are the driving force who create history. . . . The real heroes are the masses, and we ourselves are often laughably naïve. A great longing for socialism is hidden in the masses. Those people who can only move in the usual routine in revolutionary times don't perceive this longing. They're blind, with only darkness before their eyes. Sometimes they even go so far as to stand truth on its head and turn black into white.[12]

But because the masses in themselves were already socialist, to distance oneself from them represented the greatest danger for revolutionaries, meaning the leaders of the masses. If ever a revolutionary call went against the masses, it couldn't be socialist: "The reason why evil manifestations like dogmatism, empiricism, commando rule, tailism, sectarianism, bureaucratism, and arrogance at work are absolutely harmful and unacceptable, and why people must absolutely overcome the evil they suffer from, lies in the fact that this evil separates us from the masses."[13]

Revolutionaries thus had to subordinate themselves to the mass standpoint, the mass line, to melt into the masses, to swim in them like a fish in water. This is why new cadres in the K-Groups had to unconditionally break with their petit-bourgeois past in the student movement and transform themselves into proletarians, for agitation in front of the factory doors to succeed.[14] The Maoist cadre tried in their turn to adopt this or that idealized proletarian lifestyle: they swore off long hair, miniskirts, or bell bottoms and turned to "proletarian" dress; they listened to "proletarian" singing groups with their kitschy new editions of workers' songs instead of going to rock or beat concerts; they began once more to live in "orderly conditions." Most respectable was living together with one's spouse (and kids), a model which came to be idealized as the "proletarian family."[15] Likewise upheld were the alleged proletarian ideals of "cleanliness, order, joy in work, and the ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*)."[16] These shifts on the New Left were an apparent 180-degree turn, in light of the fact that the Proletariat, the People, and the Masses were being written off as revolutionary subjects a year earlier. This was not lost on clear-sighted contemporaries even then: "the ideological buccaneering of the antiauthoritarian students has the tendency to turn into dogmatism and piety, anticommunism into Stalinism, organizational anarchy into supposed 'proletarian discipline'; from the contempt for workers follows the deification of the proletariat."[17]

For the German New Left, however, the "contempt for workers" originally had other, antifascist undertones. Here, the workers had compromised themselves not only by integrating into the blinding late capitalist society of pleasure and consumption, or profiting from Western imperialism. Rather, specifically as *German* workers, they had lost all moral integrity before the world through their participation in national socialism and its project of war and extermination. Also, and for precisely this reason, they completely failed as beacons of hope for a better, more humane society before their turn to the mass line. This is why the orphans were a welcome surrogate, being too young to be implicated in Nazi rule. It was this *antifascist* contempt which the Antideutsch again picked up in the 90s, repeating the moment of the New Left in distorted form.

Antifascist contempt for workers

In the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification, a long period of uncharacteristic German patriotism broke out in the early 90s. The fear of a Germany drunk on nationalism, reclaiming its full sovereignty, worried not only the remaining radical German Left but echoed all throughout Europe. At this moment, it was not just Leftist paranoia that the strengthening of the German state and the patriotic frenzy of reunification could bring about a Fourth Reich, but seemed plausible across political and national boundaries.

Indeed, this fear only grew in the later course of the Antideutsch Left: in response to unchecked Nazi mobs and Germans cheering pogroms in Rostock-Lichtenhagen, Hoyerswerda, and Mölln, the Antideutsch identified the reunified West Germany with the Weimar Republic of the 1930s and pretended to a sober analysis of internal political power relations.[18] In truth this was the experience of reunification itself, in which the Antideutsch tried to break from the mass line and thereby from the Maoist organizations they had formerly allied themselves with. The masses, so the thinking went, could hardly be "always right" when they were henchmen, in East and West, in constructing a feared new Nazi regime. The developing Antideutsch Left wanted to separate itself from the mass line more than from perhaps any other conviction of the "old" spin-offs of the New Left. These lines from a 1990 call for an election boycott in *Konkret* are exemplary:

> In a time in which opportunistic adaptation to the national zeitgeist poses as sober realpolitik . . . and resentment breaks through even those who until now have known how to control it, we hold it necessary to part with "friendship with the masses" as a central political criterion. On the contrary, we consider it our task to build a front against nationalism in the population as well, clearly and without compromise.[19]

The "friendship with the masses," meaning the orientation of Left politics to joining with the working class, was thrown overboard, since the "zeitgeist" had become "national." This attitude, borne of a rejection of the masses from fear of a Fourth Reich, culminated in semi-essentialist projections onto Germans like that of Jürgen Elsässer, whose text *Why the Left Must Be Anti-German* Jan Gerber, member of the *Bahamas* editorial board, held up as a foundational text for the Antideutsch. Elsässer states that the Germans are "more susceptible to the worst forms of nationalist politics than other peoples, so the mass basis for aggressive racist and nationalist politics is stronger here."[20] Elsewhere, the Antideutsch pinpoint the ultimate failure of the proletariat as revolutionary subject to January 20, 1942, or the Wannsee Conference. The complete integrability of the working class into the worst cruelty was shown by the extermination campaign of Hitler's Germany; because of this — and the short-circuit is perhaps here most evident — the working class collapsed as a reference point for Leftist politics forever. As Joachim Bruhn wrote: "After the Wannsee Conference, all talk of class struggle is just historical embellishment and distortion. . . . The coming revolution will no longer be that of the working class, or of proletarian interests."[21]

The Antideutsch transformed the failure of the Left to lead the working class to socialism into the moral corruption of the (German) workers themselves. They accepted history as it happened fatalistically, in that the mass politics of the Old Left, meaning class struggle and proletarian interests, indirectly but necessarily led to Auschwitz. For if there could never be a German Soviet republic due to the Germans' overly nationalistic character, the question of what was needed for this political revolution was off the table from the start.

The Nazi takeover was not some foregone conclusion of the German workers history. Before the failure of world revolution, there lay possibilities for both socialist emancipation and fascistic barbarism in the real historical workers' movement. The idea that the masses, the people, or even the proletariat supported Hitler in the end cannot be claimed transhistorically — it is well known that his voting base came from the déclassé petit bourgeois stratum. It can only be elucidated, rather, from the real political errors of the leadership of the workers' movement, namely social democracy and Stalinism. As Trotsky wrote, Hitler's coup can only be understood as "the last link in a chain of counterrevolutionary shifts;" it was in no way predetermined, but merely the conclusion of an "era of counterrevolution" which began with the failure of the German Revolution in 1918.[22]

The "era of counterrevolution" unfolding since then didn't even appear to the Antideutsch as a result of the problems of socialist leadership, but as the ongoing sabotage of a working class which kept refusing to stand on the right side of history. Just like the New Left with their fringe group theory, the Antideutsch in the early 90s thus looked for a new frame of reference for political intervention and reoriented themselves towards "immigrants living in West Germany, minorities discriminated against as 'un-German' or 'abnormal,' and the global Leftist and left-bourgeois public."[23] Minorities and the excluded were not to ever change society again, but simply unite against the "New Germany": they turned from still-hopeful revolutionary subjects for the New Left to mere opposition against the nationalist shifts of the moment for the Antideutsch. The horizon of socially transformative politics was consequently constricted: the new "utopia," wrote Elsässer in his article, was the "destruction of the German state and its replacement by a multinational state, as well as the dissolution of the German people in a multicultural society. For this utopia, and these politics, we need individuals to be involved whose idea of the enemy is not really capital, but German nationalism."[24]

Motivated to react to the growing nationalism of the 90s, the Antideutsch accomplished the third full reversal of the German Left in relation to the workers: from the opportunistic Old Left's Proletkult and confidence in masses and progress to the New Left's abandonment of the proletariat and valorization of fringe group theory; then from the obviously fruitless and frustrating fringe group strategy to the mass line of the Communist groups; and finally, through the Antideutsch, away again from the mass line to the complete detachment from class struggle and "proletarian interest."

Two strains of Maoism thus opposed each other in the beginning of the 90s: the Maoist mass line and Soft Maoism. It is obvious that both sides are ideological poles of a hypostatization of the working class: workers, even German ones, are surely neither revolutionary nor counter-revolutionary *in themselves*, but potentially both, as their "proletarian interest" is self-contradictory rather than coherent: on one side, their social situation constantly gives rise to an underlying desire for freedom and a repressed inner rebellion against unfulfilled bourgeois promises of happiness; on the other, the reaction to this social situation hardens in them a psychic apparatus which negates the possibility of happiness, by which the workers project their own fulfillment on others and oppose in these others what they can't allow themselves. Immigrants, blacks, and homosexuals are hated for their alleged sexual libertinage and potency; women, for supposedly showing a personal tenderness the male workers have learned to deny each other; Jews, for their apparent freedom from physically and mentally harmful factory labor, hated much like the intellectuals for this reason, but also because they threaten to reopen repressed wounds when they speak of a more human condition. Wilhelm Reich, looking back on the Stalinist politics of the KPD, wrote that, "corresponding to reality would have meant declaring the average worker contradictory, that therefore he is neither clearly revolutionary nor clearly conservative, but is rather in conflict: his psychic structure develops on the one hand from his social situation which paves the way for revolutionary attitudes, and on the other hand from the overall atmosphere of authoritarian society, which are in conflict.[25]

If the Antideutsch Left was outraged that a section of the masses cheered attacks on asylum homes, this outrage testifies to an initially naïve but painfully disappointed trust in these masses, from whom the rest of the Left, conversely, was reluctant to break no matter what inhumanities they committed. Both naïve trust and outrage towards the masses are two sides of the same false coin.

Dehumanization and its opposite

That the proletariat were no saints was always clear to a Left schooled in Marx, however. Marx and Engels in the *Holy Family* did not ascribe to the proletariat the world-historic task of revolutionizing themselves and society "because they took them to be gods," but "rather the contrary: since in the fully-formed proletariat the abstraction of all humanity, even of the *semblance* of humanity, is practically complete; since the conditions of life of the proletariat sum up all the conditions of life of society today in their most inhuman form; since man has lost himself in the proletariat."[26]

The workers are therefore the consolidated expression of the barbarism of capitalist relations. They most clearly show how far these relations dehumanize those bound by them. At the same time, it becomes possible to comprehend from the vantage point of dehumanization that being proletarian and being human (in the bourgeois-emphatic sense) are mutually exclusive; that a true human life in class society is really impossible. Furthermore, the working class interested Marxism not because it existed outside of bourgeois society or would remain uninfluenced by it. Rather, the historical possibility and task of taking over and leading society fell to the workers precisely because wage dependency was becoming more and more the fate of society as a whole, meaning the working class and society were becoming more and more identical. The consciousness of social actors is not more revolutionary the farther they are from the social center, i.e., the more they represent a fringe group that could strike "the system from outside."[27] On the contrary: exactly because the workers stand in the center of the reified-fetishized exchange relations which (re)constitute society, because their labor power confronts them as a commodity and they confront themselves as a pure thing, can their (actually integrated, reified) consciousness turn revolutionary at all: every unmediated struggle of the workers can lead them closer to self-recognition as commodities, and consequently to the recognition of the essence of commodity society as a whole. As Lukács puts it, "The unique element [in the working class's] situation is that its surpassing of immediacy represents an *as*piration towards society in its totality . . . [its logic] forces it to persevere in an uninterrupted movement towards this totality, i.e. to persist in the dialectical process by which immediacies are constantly annulled and transcended."[28]

"The early Antideutsch" continues on page 4

The failure of the Antideutsch

A response to Max Hörügel

Michael Fischer

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> "Who are these Antideutsch, really? Maybe everyone, and the government first off."[1]
>
> Wolfgang Pohrt

WE LEARN IN *Die Platypus Review* that the Antideutsch have failed.[2] One can hardly object to these findings, as it was the Antideutsch's goal to be the wrecking ball of the Left. For its part, the Left enjoys stable popularity in society at large, and has degenerated, despite all interventions, into the last defensive ideological bulwark of the declining neoliberal order. Yet for Platypus activist Max Hörügel, this failure stems from the fact that the earlier Antideutsch already couldn't accomplish what happens to be the goal of his own organization, which for fifteen years now also couldn't realize its idealized panoply of wishes: to form the workers into a conscious social actor and lead them to revolution. In short, to mold a cadre party which the working masses will then magically follow, because a few students dream of and hold lectures on socialism. However, one doesn't like to talk about anti-Semitism within the Left. This becomes obvious as the article only marginally treats the enthusiasm of the New Left for the anti-imperialist struggle. The hope for socialism, disappointed in the metropoles, was merely shifted to other regions of the world. This is at least the well-meaning interpretation.

And yet the painless change of scenery from Vietnam to Palestine implies something else. Maybe it was the anti-civilization, anti-West undercurrent spoken of by Adorno which kindled the enthusiasm for these anti-colonial struggles, an enthusiasm borne of a milieu which only decades earlier had largely rallied behind national socialism. What the student youth in Germany lacked — the struggle against the West, Mammon, and the Jews, now called Zionists — they found in tricontinental nationalism, which merged with the "fascist ideal" (Adorno): "Already during the war the *slogans** about Western plutocracies and proletarian nations expressed sympathy with those who felt shortchanged in the imperialist competition and also wanted a place at the table."[3]

Hörügel's critique does not hit the mark even where it at least seems to be on the right track about dragging along the bad inheritance of the New Left with respect to the working class. The outsourcing of production to the capitalist peripheries, which followed the oil shock of 1973, increasingly impeded the Western proletariat's ability to strike. The Death of the Subject proclaimed by postmodern thinkers affirmed this apparent defeat and aided the breakthrough of Left-liberal identity politics. Wolfgang Pohrt perceived the specifically Antideutsch form of this phenomenon almost twenty years ago. Following a completely failed event where he, together with Henryk Broder, actively scandalized the Antideutsch public that had eagerly gathered there to listen, Pohrt polemicized against that part of the Left, whose leading thinker he was considered to be: "While the unemployed are thrown back to pauperism and working people become dependent on speculation for their pensions — pieces of paper which secure the sellers a place in the sun, but the owners, a place in the poorhouse — during all this, this Left no longer recognizes any classes, only races."[4]

A whole host of these pop-Antideutsch Leftists, who had fought earlier against antisemitism, racism, and German conditions with blue-and-white flags — but who didn't want to hear anything about class and exploitation — likely discovered their love for gender stars,[5] skin colors, and whimsical minorities at their precarious university jobs. Anyone left out of an academic career despite their most industrious will to adapt landed in the Greens, or fought in Die Linke for their Greenification. The Antideutsch, meanwhile, split in the middle of the 2000s into Soft and Hard factions, whereby the latter increasingly distanced themselves from the term Antideutsch and came to understand themselves exclusively as ideology critique. The slightly soporific periodical *sans phrase* was established in Vienna around a dispute over whether the alleged gaps in the determinist Adorno should be supplemented with Sartre's concept of freedom; and the division into Left and Right Antideutsch proceeded through the refugee crisis. Although the article leaves all of this in the dark, it reveals something about Platypus itself. The guiding principles of one's actions and thoughts are no longer the changing economic constellations which a materialist critique of society aiming at communism must constantly take up so as not to falsify itself, but rather insights from specific conditions, congealed into doctrinaire ideas. Even historical materialism regresses into a variety of idealism when, as reified theory, it no longer takes up the experience which transforms it; thereby unfettered from the dialectic — like the much-discussed-by-Platypus Georg Lukács — it obtrudes, from above, upon a society meant only to be understood. Taking aim at this materialism become dogmatic, Friedrich Engels wrote in a letter to Werner Sombart shortly before his death that, "Marx's way of viewing things is not a doctrine but a method. It does not provide ready-made dogmas, but criteria for further research and the method for this research."[6]

The current social irrelevance of the radical Left, including that of its communist remnants, is also a result of its notorious unwillingness to really understand the circumstances under which it operates. This inclination towards idealism follows from an unquestioned class position as intellectual workers, unconsciously proceeding from the transformative power of ideas, since they themselves produce nothing else. The legacy of the New Left which was to be composed entirely of new members of the middle class, also bequeathed to Platypus, explains their resistance to the critique of the professional managerial class (PMC) which Barbara and John Ehrenreich developed from a materialist class analysis of progressivism around 1900 and the New Left. The Ehrenreichs cautioned that unless it buried its class interests, Left ideology ran the risk of establishing a dictatorship of the PMC instead of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Even the idea of a cadre party is borne of a contempt for the workers: corruptible and easily influenced, they only need the right leadership to bring them towards socialism.

In times of sharpened economic inequality, in which capitalist contradictions do not develop into contradictions against capitalism itself — since the antagonisms are increasingly controlled ideologically and less by the welfare state — it is nevertheless irrelevant "whether the idea of this upheaval has already been expressed a hundred times."[7] In the suspension of class conflict beginning with the first half of the last century, the new middle classes, which as opposed to the petty bourgeoisie control no means of production, have played a prominent role. The class position of teachers, social workers, psychologists, actors, journalists, and engineers relegates them to the task of reproducing capitalist culture and sustaining class relations. From here follows the pipe dream of a harmonious and pluralistic society, which finds expression in a peculiar anticapitalism directed against the possibly egoistic and simultaneously divisive objectives of the bourgeoisie and the working class.

One would need to intervene against those Left / Left-liberal forces who make the growing economic dislocations disappear behind categories of exclusion, and thereby act as ideological lightning rods for social criticism. The current culture war originates from the class interests of the PMC on the Left, and those of the old petty bourgeoisie on the Right, interests which cannot be countered by focusing on supposedly pure economic questions, since they are themselves an expression of these questions. Postmodern identity politics thus reveals itself to be capitalism's miserable but extremely inexpensive promise of emancipation, which assures a fair distribution of misery according to skin color, gender, and sexual orientation, thereby perpetuating and hierarchizing exploitation instead of overcoming it. The critique of these identity politics and the Left which supports them is a quite desperate attempt to restore the basis for radical social critique. To Platypus, however, this appears as a false struggle per se, only fueling the opposition of workers' identity politics to that of minorities. This way one can steer clear of actually dealing with the current conditions and dedicate oneself to the texts in the reading group, none of which may be younger than fifty years old. **|P**

[1] Wolfgang Pohrt, "FAQ," in *Werke*, Band 9, ed. Klaus Bittermann (Berlin: Edition Tiamat, 2021), 25.

[2] Max Hörügel, "Die frühen Antideutschen und die Arbeiterklasse," *Die Platypus Review* 16 (Herbst 2021), available online at <https://platypus1917.org/2021/09/30/fruehe_antideutsche_und_die_arbeiter/>, and translated into English in this issue.

[3] Theodor Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 10, *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* II, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 565; available in English as "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 89–103, and in *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 3–18. The asterisk denotes that Adorno used the English word in his German text.

[4] Pohrt, "FAQ," 28.

[5] A nonstandard, gender-neutral writing convention since ca. 2013 for nouns relating to people: e.g., *Fahrer*innen*, "drivers, both male and female" encompassing masculine *Fahrer*, feminine *Fahrerin*, and plural forms.

[6] Letter from Friedrich Engels to Werner Sombart (March 11, 1895), in *Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels — Werke*, Band 39 (Berlin: Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, 1968), 428, available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1895/letters/95_03_11.htm>.

[7] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie: Kritik der neuesten deutschen Philosophie in ihren Repräsentanten Feuerbach, B. Bauer und Stirner, und des deutschen Sozialismus in seinen verschiedenen Propheten*, in *Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels — Werke*, Band 3 (Berlin: Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, 1978), 39; in English: "Concerning the Production of Consciousness," in *The German Ideology: Part I*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 165.

"The early Antideutsch," continued from page 3

This process of gaining consciousness, in which the virtually already proletarianized society recognizes itself, is possible only when the workers stand entirely within alienated society and not at its fringes. Or, as Adorno writes:

> Dehumanization is no external power . . . . It is precisely the intrinsic reality of the oppressed in the system, who used to stand out because of their wretchedness, whereas today their wretchedness lies in the fact that they can never escape . . . . This means, however, that the dehumanization is also its opposite. In reified human beings reification finds its outer limits. They catch up with the technical forces of production in which the relations of production lie hidden: in this way these relations lose the shock of their alien nature because the alienation is so complete. But they may soon lose their power. Only when the victims completely assume the features of the ruling civilization will they be capable of wresting them from the dominant power.[29]

So the life of the workers cannot be affirmed in itself, and these circumstances do not anticipate true life under socialism in a positive way as implied by the K-Group kitsch. On the other hand, neither can their dehumanization be one-sidedly despised, so as to bury the problem. That the masses or the workers celebrate attacks on asylum-seekers or take a nationalist turn, should point the Left to the failure of its own project. This is the point which the Antideutsch neglected to grasp in all its meanings. Had the Antideutsch been able to break with the one-sided antinomy of hatred or deification of workers, they could have been able to recognize the underlying political task, which remained as actual to their time as to the beginning of the 20th century and today: to lead the class struggle in forming the working class into a conscious proletariat, which would carry minorities and the excluded with it to take control of the state, then to dissolve in the classless society.

Whether the Antideutsch would have come closer to this task themselves is another matter, and what this practice of bringing social minorities in concert with the working class under socialist leadership would look like is questionable. How this socialist leadership should be organized is in any case not concretely foreseeable. But the collapse of the Stalinist Eastern Bloc and the disintegration of the New Left's aftermath would have been the moment after which to ruthlessly work through the failures of the Left in the 20th century, in order to escape the one-sided juxtapositions of this century. This working-through would have perhaps prepared the ground for a new Left force which would have been ready to approach this question in a changed historical situation.

Yet the Antideutsch lost themselves in the occupational therapy of evaluating German foreign policy, the Middle East conflict, and the critique of the "German essence." In maintaining their antifascist contempt for the rest of society, they displaced the working-through of this inherited antinomy, so that it remains opposed even today: an identity politics for workers and an identity politics for minorities. The task of a Left force yet to emerge remains to free the Left from both of these one-sided conceptions, since the Antideutsch Left revealed itself stillborn in this essential respect. **|P**

[1] Jan Gerber describes this period in the German radical Left as "one of the most serious crises—its historical origin understood to be the founding of the German Jacobin Club around 1789—of its approximately two hundred-year old history," in *Nie wieder Deutschland? Die Linke im Zusammenbruch des „realen Sozialismus"* (Freiburg: ça ira Verlag, 2018), 15.

[2] Quoted in *Gerber, Nie wieder Deutschland?*, 89.

[3] Mike Macnair, "Intersectionalism, the highest stage of western Stalinism?," *Critique* 46, no. 4 (2018): 541–58.

[4] See Wladimir Iljitsch Lenin, *Der Imperialismus als höchstes Stadium des Kapitalismus*, in *W. I. Lenin Werke*, Band 22 (Berlin: Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, 1960), 189–309, available online at <http://www.mlwerke.de/le/le22/le22_189.htm>, and in English at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>.

[5] Herbert Marcuse, *Der Eindimensionale Mensch. Studium zur Ideologie der fortgeschrittenen Industriegesellschaft* (Springe: Zu Klampen, 2014). Published in English under *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*.

[6] Ibid., 267.

[7] Ibid., 263.

[8] Ibid., 267.

[9] See Jens Benicke, *Von Adorno zu Mao: Die Rezeption der kritischen Theorie und die Auseinandersetzung mit der nationalsozialistischen deutschen Vergangenheit von der antiautoritären Fraktion der Studentenbewegung zu den K-Gruppen* (Freiburg: ça ira Verlag, 2010), 141, available online at <https://freidok.uni-freiburg.de/fedora/objects/freidok:7122/datastreams/FILE1/content>.

[10] Ibid., 131.

[11] Ibid., 140ff.

[12] Mao Tsetung, *Worte des Vorsitzenden Mao Tsetung* (Essen: Neuer Weg Verlag, 1993), 140ff. Published in English as *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*.

[13] Ibid., 147.

[14] Jan Ole Arps, *Frühschicht: Linke Fabrikinterventionen in den 70er Jahren* (Berlin: Assoziation A, 2011), 76ff.

[15] Ibid., 82.

[16] Ibid., 83.

[17] Fritz Kramer, "Über Sozialismus in China und Russland und die Marxsche Theorie der Geschichte," *Rotes Forum – Organ des SDS-Heidelberg* 3 (June 1970): 5, available online at <https://www.mao-projekt.de/BRD/BW/KAR/Heidelberg_Rotes_Forum/Heidelberg_Rotes_Forum_1970_03.shtml>.

[18] Gerber, *Nie wieder Deutschland?*, 92ff.

[19] Regula Bott, Theresia Degener, Thomas Ebermann, autonome Lupus-Gruppe / Rhein-Main, max. & sab., Heiner Möller, Maren Psyk, Karl Heinz Roth, Oliver Tolmein, Rainer Trampert, Detlef zum Winkel, "Keine Stimme für Deutschland," *Konkret* 11 (1990): 15.

[20] Jürgen Elsässer, "Weshalb die Linke anti-deutsch sein muß," *ak – Zeitung für linke Debatte und Praxis* 315 (February 1990): 32.

[21] Joachim Bruhn, "Metaphysik der Klasse," *Phase 2* 11 (March 2004).

[22] Leon Trotsky, "Porträt des Nationalsozialismus," *Die neue Weltbühne* 2, no. 28 (July 1933), available online in English under the title "What is National Socialism?" at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1933/330610.htm>.

[23] Elsässer, "Weshalb die Linke," 34.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Wilhelm Reich, *Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* (Cologne: Anaconda, 2011), 42. Published in English as *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*.

[26] Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Die heilige Familie oder Kritik der kritischen Kritik*, in *Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels – Werke*, Band 2 (Berlin: Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, 1972), 38, available online in English as *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Criticism* at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/index.htm>.

[27] Cf. Marcuse, *Der Eindimensionale Mensch*, 267.

[28] Georg Lukács, "Die Verdinglichung und das Bewußtsein des Proletariats," in *Frühschriften II. Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2013), 358; "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971), 174, available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/>.

[29] Theodor W. Adorno, "Reflexionen zur Klassentheorie," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 8, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2020), 391. Available in English as "Reflections on Class Theory," in *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 109–10, available online at <https://platypus1917.org/wp-content/uploads/readings/adorno_classtheory1942.pdf>.

"Deep underground," continued from page 2

organization to do. There would be a lot of pre-planning and things getting fixed. The organization in effect just gets to follow the party line.

DR: They would edge out any dissent?

NQ: Something like that. As what happened in the Soviet Union or what still happens in China — corporatist arrangements, or even worse than that. There would be secret or clandestine cells or party groups within organizations that the general membership would not know about. They would pre-discuss things, pre-arrange things. They would try to get the discussion going their way, so that eventually what they pre-discussed would come out as decisions of the organization.

DR: It was not necessarily a clash of ideas, but rather a pre-determining of the conversation.

NQ: Yes, that's the problem that arose within the movement. Quite a number of the NGOs and the mass organizations reacted to this way of doing things.

DR: You mentioned in your book that around this time the party was seeking belligerency status. Was that some sort of strategic retreat from what it was doing before? What did that mean for them?

NQ: This was a particular fixation on the part of Joma Sison. To be able to eventually attain victory — revolutionary victory — there might be a stage in the diplomatic struggle, where you could try to gain recognition as some sort of a quasi-state — a political force that is capable of running a state. Under international law, which may already be outdated, a rebel force may be looked upon as an insurgency. Then the next stage is belligerency status: you are seen as almost equal to a force or party in power. And then finally you are the actual state already.

Talk of belligerency status was quite common in the 19th century, perhaps even up to the early 20th century, but the concept has become outdated. Over the last seventy years or so I do not know of any rebel force that attained belligerency status. Biafra nearly attained that status at one point. Joma had this illusion that through the peace process, with negotiations, the more that you are treated almost as an equal to the Philippine state, the closer you are nearing belligerency status. The way he puts it is that the NDF already has belligerency status, and this only needs to be recognized by state entities. This is wrong, but that is what he has been angling for in the peace negotiations.

Through the peace process, you do gain higher international recognition. Back in 1990 when I was still in the Party and in the movement, I could still go to Brussels without having to get a special permit. We campaigned among the European Parliament members along these lines: the civil conflict in the Philippines has been a long struggle; it has been going on for over twenty years now. So many people have been killed, so many human-rights violations committed. It is important that the two sides should work out a negotiated political settlement. The resolution that we were able to get passed was one in which the European Parliament called for the Philippine government and the NDF to work out a political settlement of their long-standing conflict.

For the very first time you had the European Parliament, a prestigious intergovernmental body, calling on the NDF in a formal resolution, in a sense granting the NDF a certain level of international recognition. The thinking then was that the more you have such resolutions from international bodies, the higher the international reputation of the NDF would grow. In the mind of Joma, this would eventually contribute to recognition of belligerency status.

In line with this, one of Joma's goals has long been to bring in a third party in the peace negotiations, preferably a government or an important intergovernmental body. In 2001 the Arroyo government actually approached Norway to act as a third party, giving what the NDF wanted on a silver platter. Not long after, the Arroyo government realized its mistake, that the NDF was just playing around with them. Eventually, when they could not get the NDF to come up with a final agreement with the government, what did they do? They resorted to extrajudicial killings.

DR: Of NPA.

NQ: Of NPA and the radical Left in general. **|P**

[1] "New Social Movement."

[2] Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, *Contested Democracy and the Left in the Philippines after Marcos* (New Haven: Yale South Asian Studies, 2008).

[3] Robert Francis B. Garcia, *To Suffer Thy Comrades: How the Revolution Decimated Its Own* (Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing, 2001), 36.

[4] Available online at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm>.

[5] In *Remembering/Rethinking EDSA*, eds. JPaul S. Manzanilla and Caroline S. Hau (Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing, 2016).

[6] Walden Bello, "The dual crisis of the Philippine progressive movement," in *Reexamining and Renewing the Philippine Progressive Vision: Papers and Proceedings of the 1993 Conference of the Forum for Philippine Alternatives (FOPA)*, eds. John Gershman and Walden Bello (Quezon City: Forum for Philippine Alternatives, 1993), 21–22.

The next round came during the boycott. I remember back then in November of 85 when Marcos declared that there would be elections in February. People were saying, "It's going to be rigged, it's going to be rigged. We should boycott." And I said, "I don't question the point that the election is going to be rigged. What is important to consider is what happens after the election has been rigged." I was telling people my prediction: one, there is going to be wide-scale rioting, or, two, there is going to be an insurrection or popular uprising. If that is what could happen after, then we should adjust our tactics accordingly, so that we are best positioned after the rigging to take the lead.

The leadership decided on a boycott. By deciding to boycott you separated yourself from the mainstream of the opposition, which was then of course headed by Cory Aquino. And you could not just get back into the mainstream without Cory reaching out to you. That Cory would link up with the Left was very possible, because she would not have been able to sustain the protest, the civil disobedience, after the elections. Instead of the Yellow and Red coming together after the election, however, there was a military revolt. And so instead of a coalition with the Reds, Cory went into a coalition with the military rebels: Juan Ponce Enrile (Defense Minister), Fidel Ramos (Chief of Staff), and the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM).

DR: In a sense they seized the leadership initiative from you.

NQ: You could put it that way. But you really have to be quite perceptive, sharp about how things could possibly go. Afterwards I came up with a series of papers criticizing the boycott under the pen name of Marty Villalobos. Then others also criticized the boycott. But my papers had actually gone farther. I had argued that it was not just the boycott tactic that was wrong, that there was something much deeper: there was something wrong with the overall strategy. We should have shifted to an insurrectional strategy earlier, as happened in Nicaragua. The Maoist strategy of protracted people's war was too fixated on the primacy of armed struggle, particularly military struggle. You had to look at the mass movement, which sometimes could take on something of an insurrectional nature. You had to be sharp in looking at where things were moving. I had correctly predicted that there would be an insurrection. What I had not quite foreseen was that unlike the Nicaraguan insurrection, the uprising in the Philippines could turn out to be unarmed or peaceful. Nonetheless it was an insurrection.

DR: Some go so far as to say that the Communist Party didn't really have a theory of civil society.

NQ: To be fair to the movement, the term "civil society" was not really in vogue then. It became more popular as a term in the late 80s and 90s after the experiences in Eastern Europe and Latin America. The term that was being used then by the revolutionary forces was "mass movement."

The Vietnamese came up with a term that is more apt: political struggle as contrasted to military struggle, and political forces as opposed to military forces. They did not have this hang-up of rigidly associating the armed struggle with countryside, and mass movement with the cities. The interpretation within the CPP was that armed uprising was just part of armed struggle. But a distinction has to be made between armed uprising and military struggle. Popular movements, mass movements could develop and become an insurrectional force separate from the military force. You have to see how the mass movement — the political struggle — develops. It could stay in the realm of the legal and the unarmed, but it could also go beyond that, turn insurrectional, it could turn armed.

There's a difference between the Chinese protracted people's war version and the Vietnamese version. The Nicaraguan strategy is also different. In the case of the Vietnamese, they saw political struggle and military struggle as being both fundamental and decisive. And it could go either way. In 1945 it was actually the political forces which were decisive; the August Revolution was basically an insurrection. In the case of the Philippines, in line with the Maoist strategy, the main force is the armed struggle and the people's army, and then the mass movement supports the armed struggle and the people's army. In Nicaragua, they had that framework early on, but later turned it around. They said no, it is the guerrilla force, the army which is going to be in support of the popular forces, which by then had turned insurrectional.

DR: What is the relationship of the armed struggle to the movement? If you use the Maoist framework the movement is a shield for the armed struggle.

NQ: It is just a support, not really a shield. In a sense, it is a bit of a shield in the early stages. In the Maoist frame, you are supposed to move from guerrilla warfare to regular mobile warfare then to positional warfare. That means you must build up from a guerrilla force into a regular army. Regularization is a very tall order. That would have to mean that you have regular sources for your arms and ammunition. You cannot just do that by *"agaw armas"* ("seizing arms"), where you shoot a soldier and take away his gun. What do you do when you need such things as anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons? You cannot just rely on the usual guerilla style in getting those weapons. You really must procure them from abroad.

DR: Earlier on the imagination was that China would be providing these weapons.

NQ: By the 80s there was no more illusion that China was going to help us. That was already the time of Deng Xiaoping. It was Mao and the Gang of Four who had been more supportive of the idea of extending arms support to Maoist rebels in various parts of the world. The CPP tried to bring in arms from abroad — all three major attempts failed: MV Karagatan, MV Andrea, and then the North Korean attempt. If you are not even able to bring in arms by sea, how are you going to solve the problem of regular supply of arms and ammunition for regular mobile warfare?

DR: To the extent that this becomes a military ideology, what role does the Left play?

NQ: In the Chinese Revolution, the urban forces involved in protests were massacred. The nature of the mass movement there, if you can call it such, was to organize the peasants, who were the overwhelming majority of China's population. You organize the peasants to provide support for the revolutionary army. They provide food and lodging and act as couriers. You have stable base areas maintained by the peasants where the army can grow. In China in the 1930s and 40s you could hardly talk about an open mass movement in the urban centers. It simply was not there. But in revolutionary movements in many countries after the 40s you saw a lot more of the urban struggle, the mass movement, the political forces.

DR: I wanted to jump to a point that you made in your book *Contested Democracy and the Left* (2008): "The Left has generally been used to refer to those who want change, favor more equality and resort to non-traditional even radical or revolutionary means."[2] It seems a fair definition, but that brings up the ideological question. What is the Left's utopia? What is it trying to change, and how? Is this something that the Philippines could have provided in the metropole in ways that China could not have?

NQ: In the Philippines you have an elite or oligarchic democracy. Our objective was to change this into a more genuine and egalitarian type of democracy. The economy would be a mixed economy, as we could not move immediately into a socialist type of society. While aiming to put an end to elite or oligarchic democracy, we rejected the idea of a one-party type of dictatorship as you have in China. At least that is what the non-Maoist and non-Stalinist forces within the National Democratic movement felt should have happened.

DR: I want to bring up a point from Bobby Garcia's book on the purges, *To Suffer Thy Comrade* (2001): "Within the movement we practice collectivism putting the highest premium on consensus and giving little space for internal dissent. Collectivism also meant subsuming the interests of the individual to the greater good and making sacrifices."[3] Garcia's examples include activists refusing a bed because they wanted to be sleeping on the floor like the poor. Or even going so far as not wanting to wear denim blue jeans because that was seen as Western.

NQ: There is the concern about the collective or the people in general, that democracy should be more inclusive. That is very true of the values that the movement tried to propagate. But this came in conflict with the operational, organizational mechanism within, which was, of course, democratic centralism.

According to Mao, you should be guided by the so-called "mass line." Cadres and activists are tasked to get the scattered ideas from the masses and then they try to synthesize and systematize them. Then the party or higher organ would bring them back to the people. But the problem is that sometimes a decision made up at the top does not reflect what was said down below. Or sometimes you run out of time or you're in a rushed situation and there's no opportunity anymore to gather the scattered ideas. You end up with just directives or orders from the higher organ.

For example, the boycott decision. There would not have been much opportunity to really come up with a systematic gathering of opinions from all over the country before you decide to boycott the election. It was just the executive committee that made the decision to boycott.

DR: How about the broader ideas of cultural revolution in the Maoist framework? For instance, Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* (1942).[4] He talks about this idea of the artist's self-transformation through struggle, into the working class — a literal transformation instead of an intellectual one.

NQ: Early on, even before the Maoist CPP was founded, there was already the idea of a cultural revolution, where people would remold themselves from the bourgeois way of thinking and think more in terms of the people, find out what exactly the problems, interests and demands of ordinary people are, and think in terms of the history of the country, nationalism, etc. You have to remold yourself, because you were fed with all sorts of very bourgeois ideas in school, you've grown up in a very class-divided society and may have imbibed the values and ideas of the ruling classes. But later on, the problem was that these instruments of so-called cultural revolution became instruments for indoctrination.

You were supposed to be exposed to liberated ideas, revolutionary ideas. For example, the protracted people's war. It was even propagated in the party documents that Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought has universal application.

DR: How did the movement approach this idea of self-transformation?

NQ: Let's examine the Marxist and the Maoist way of looking at things. Mao insisted on concrete analysis of concrete conditions. Only on the basis of a proper social investigation should you come up with a plan. For Marx, it is not just interpreting the world but also changing it. The element of agency is very important. But along the way there is a great deal of dogmatization.

For example, concrete analysis of concrete conditions. All those communist parties in Southeast Asia that turned Maoist, what do they say? "Our society is semi-colonial and semi-feudal." "The exploitative classes are the big landlords, comprador bourgeoisie, and bureaucratic capitalists." "Armed struggle is the principal form of struggle." All these formulas being propagated as something universal — these are contradictory to "concrete analysis of concrete conditions."

DR: Insofar as the movement's "National Democratic" identity was overtly nationalist, rather than communist, was it appropriated by the government's nationalism?

NQ: Joma Sison (founder of the CPP) and company tried to make some sort of a parallel with China. Before you reach communism, which would be far, far away, there would be socialism. And before socialism, you would have some sort of transitory stage which in China, they called "people's democracy."

In the CPP, the transitory stage is also sometimes referred to as people's democracy. But because we had been saying that the Philippines is semi-colonial, it was important to highlight anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. To emphasize the element of national sovereignty, national independence, the term that became much more in-use was "national democracy."

DR: In "'People Power' 1986 in Retrospect: A Conjunctural Analysis,"[5] you set up a framework for thinking about the different forces present in the years leading up to EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, the main thoroughfare after which the 1986 revolution was named). They are the Marcos camp, the revolutionary Left, the traditional elite opposition, and then disgruntled military officers, maybe 300 men in RAM, a very small but capable and vocal force within the military. Could you explain how these forces related to each other in the several years leading up to EDSA?

NQ: Of course, there was the Marcos dictatorship and the forces that were aligned with it. But let me focus on the forces that opposed the dictatorship. There was the radical Left represented by the Communist Party, the New People's Army (NPA), the National Democratic Front (NDF), and the open, legal National Democrats (NDs). Then you have the traditional, legal opposition. And then, the military rebels or disgruntled military officers.

Each of these groups was angling for a different type of regime that would replace the Marcos dictatorship. For the military rebels, that would be a military dictatorship, but they would have been open to the possibility of linking up with the traditional opposition, but certainly not with the Left; they were very much opposed to the radical Left. The traditional opposition wanted to bring back a democracy similar to that before Marcos declared martial law, basically, a return to elite or oligarchic democracy. And then the radical Left, which wanted to set up a people's republic patterned after that of China, which of course many regard as having been — and as still being — a one-party dictatorship.

These were the forces that were competing for power. Let me make a comparison with Nicaragua again. The struggle to replace Somoza was basically between the traditional elite opposition and the Sandinistas, with one force trying to outdo the other. Eventually it was the Sandinistas who were able to take the lead in the insurrection. They brought in the traditional opposition as a partner in the government afterwards. Later the elite politicians got out, because they believed that the government had gotten too much under the control of the Sandinistas.

Now in the case of the Philippines, after the Aquino assassination in 1983, there was the Justice for Aquino Justice for All (JAJA) movement. There was a big debate about this JAJA when it was still being formed. One idea was just to name it "Justice for Aquino." But many, with the influence of the Left, pushed for the movement to focus not only on Aquino, but on all victims of repression. On the big banner that was shown during the protest march, you will see Ninoy Aquino, Macli-ing Dulag, Edjop, et al. In fact, the four figures alongside Aquino in that banner were from the ND movement. JAJA was a combination of the two – the traditional opposition or Yellows, and the NDs or the Reds. Through the years, because of the hardline way that the NDs handled alliances, friction grew between the Yellows and the Reds. In the meantime, there were all those secret goings-on in the military.

The Left was on the rise. There was a spike in the tactical military offensives of the NPA, but still at the guerrilla level. And then we had the so-called *Welgang Bayan* ("people's strike"). I was heading and coordinating these *Welgang Bayans* in Mindanao. These were multi-sectoral strikes, general strikes; in Mindanao, we saw these as leading to, and preparing for, popular uprising.

But then came the boycott. If the ND forces had not boycotted, it would have been Cory together with the Reds — Yellows and Reds together. Marcos would have used that as a pretext for a bloody crackdown on the opposition forces — the Reds possibly together with the Yellows. And that could have led to something like the Sandinista dénouement.

But instead, because the Left had boycotted the elections, it was only Cory at center stage. Immediately after the rigging of the elections, Cory called for civil disobedience. For a while the civil disobedience worked, but then it began petering out. And so, there were negotiations for Yellow and Red again. The call would have been for *Welgang Bayan* all over the country. The idea was that it was going to start on Monday, because if you are going to call for a *Welgang Bayan*, it would need to be on a weekday. But towards the end of the week (Saturday), the military revolt occurred. Thus, instead of Red and Yellow getting together, it became the rebels and the traditional opposition working together. And then Cardinal Jaime Sin called for support for the rebels. That sparked off the popular uprising. So, the Left was left out.

DR: I imagine Juan Ponce Enrile had anticipated this Red-Yellow coalition.

NQ: Possibly, but in their case, they had to revolt simply because their coup plot had already been uncovered. They had no choice but to rebel and find some way to get out. That precluded the start of a formal Red-Yellow combined action. If the military rebel forces had not rebelled at that particular time and the *Welgang Bayan* had started, the dynamics would have changed. It would have been something more like what happened in Nicaragua. That would have been quite bloody.

DR: On the question of the traditional elite, you write "the civic uprising after the Aquino assassination involved not just the popular forces, but also large sections of the middle class and the oppositional forces." The subsequent revolt of 1986 is elite-led, but at the same time it is a culmination of the long popular struggle which the radical Left is leading. Why did the Left not anticipate that the traditional opposition would snatch the victory from their grasp?

NQ: This is due to the fixation on a Maoist framework. Even at the time of the boycott, party leaders and NDF spokespersons were still thinking in terms of moving from strategic defensive to strategic stalemate, and from guerrilla warfare to regular warfare. They were associating a victory against Marcos with a military victory of the NPA. They were so far off. Even up to now the NPA has never really gotten beyond guerilla warfare.

DR: At another point in your book you mention that the Left contributed to EDSA but in a way that they did not anticipate.

NQ: For a long period during the development of that anti-dictatorship movement, it was the Left that was leading it. It was in the home stretch where the Left just made so many mistakes. And of course, the overall strategy was wrong.

DR: According to Patricio Abinales, Joseph Estrada and the other so-called "magnificent twelve" senators who voted out the American bases (in 1991) did what the Left had dreamed of doing for decades. Abinales says the senators "did not invoke the CPP as an authority. Instead the majority of the magnificent twelve paid homage to the nationalist struggle of the late Senator Claire M. Recto, the father of Filipino nationalism and his successors Senators Lorenzo Tanada and Jose Diokno." Why was the Left not able to seize hegemony over the ideological question of nationalism by this point?

NQ: Of course, the open, legal National Democrats were also involved in the anti-bases campaign up to the very end. But in the case of traditional oppositionists (anti-Cory politicians), including Juan Ponce Enrile and Joseph Estrada, there were certain elements who were critical of the U.S. In the case of Enrile, the relationship he had with the U.S. might have been colored by the experiences he had during the Marcos period. Of course, he himself was angling for a top job — the presidency itself, at one point. One of the major factors why the radical Left could not play a much more prominent role in the home stretch of the anti-bases campaign was that it happened during the split. The movement was just on the verge of splitting.

DR: But the point Abinales makes here is that even from the very beginning the Left had not resolved the national question. Is it an ideological problem for them?

NQ: Well, no. The anti-bases position had been strong from the 1940s. The Left was very consistent all the way until the bases were closed. If the objective was really to kick the bases out, it was very good tactics in the home stretch to let traditional politicians, even the likes of Estrada and Enrile, speak out. That was fine. I would say that in this period the Left might not have been as militant or as vocal or as outspoken because of the problems within.

DR: In another chapter you write, "the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP, the old Communist Party) and the CPP actually played both positive and negative roles vis-à-vis the democratization process." The chapter is entitled "Threat to democracy or democratizing force." It seems like you structure it as a contradiction.

NQ: Yes, in the sense that you want democracy to be really the rule of the people, for the workers and the peasants who are the majority. You want them to be more involved — not just in participating in political processes, but also for their voices to be heard, and their decisions to be put into practice. In that sense, you had the democratizing influence of the PKP and the CPP, and also democratizing in terms of developing democracy from a formal democracy that is much more concerned about individual freedoms, into a broader type of democracy, a higher level which goes beyond just the political frame but also goes into the social and economic arenas.

On the other hand, the Left was working towards an alternative that would have set up a one-party dictatorship. That is a negative, the opposite of what you want democracy to be. Within the Left's own internal processes, decision-making was being manipulated. The higher bodies, especially the party leadership, dictated what should be done in the programs and strategies. That is a negative for democracy.

DR: Did the Left at that time have the wherewithal to draw the broad masses into a democratic process in a way that was not happening through the ordinary venues of parliamentary democracy?

NQ: Yes, in the sense that you try to mobilize workers or peasants. You make them aware of certain issues. This is what is going to happen with this particular law, for example. Or this particular practice or policy that the government is trying to institutionalize or implement. And then the masses come out protesting and insisting on their rights, advocating for certain alternatives, certain programs. That is the democratizing role the Party played.

DR: You also cite Walden Bello's idea of popular empowerment — a process of building up a parallel power in civil society that would eventually alter the exercise of state power. Bello says that "transforming the formal structure of the state would be the objective ... to make it less resistant to the attainment of people's interests."[6] Is Bello here characterizing the democratic engagement of the broad masses as a political process?

NQ: It is a sort of Gramscian thinking where you have civil society as an arena for contestation between ideologies or between the thinking of the ruling class and the thinking and organization of the popular forces — the workers, farmers, the masses. It is a contestation for hegemony in civil society and eventually also in overall power.

DR: You quote Ricardo Reyes in the same chapter along similar lines. He says "we stand for autonomous development of social movements and civil society vis-à-vis the political movements" and again, it seems like there is some sort of difference.

NQ: I think it has to do with the relationship between a political party or a political movement, but most especially a political party, and civil-society groups — NGOs and mass organizations. One of the problems that the movement had to confront is that, at a certain point, the so-called ND organizations were just following the party line. In a mass organization, there would be a UG group inside — a party branch or an ND cell. Before a meeting of the organization would take place, there would be meetings of this cell or the party group. The cell would draw up what it wanted to get the

"Deep underground" continues on page 4